

THE ECONOMY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, inflation continues to batter American families at a rate we have not seen in 40 years. Since last year, the prices of items that Texans use every day have increased more than 9 percent. That is, if your paycheck is still the same, you have 9 percent less purchasing power just since last year. At the grocery store, the price of bread is up nearly 11 percent. Chicken is up more than 17 percent. And the price of eggs has jumped a whopping 33 percent.

I sense there is a huge disconnect between the folks here in Washington—perhaps in Congress—that this does not have a dramatic effect in terms of our daily lives; but to the people we represent, the 29 million people I represent, this is real, it is happening now, and it is to the detriment of their quality of life.

Groceries aren't the only thing that are challenging family budgets. Electricity is up 14 percent.

I will be traveling with some colleagues to the Rio Grande Valley this afternoon. I looked at the weather forecast for today and tomorrow. It will be 104 degrees in the Rio Grande Valley; and, no, it will not be a dry heat. And demand on our electricity is real because people cannot live without air-conditioning and climate control; but in order to run your air-conditioning, you are going to have to pay 14 percent more for that electricity this year as opposed to last year.

Propane used at summer barbecues costs 26 percent more. And gasoline prices—there are about 280 million cars on the road today that run using gasoline. The price has jumped 60 percent since last year. If people want to go on a vacation, they just commute to work, they want to take their kids to summer camp, they have got to pay 60 percent more for gasoline than they did last year. And, for the first time, the national average price has exceeded \$5 a gallon. Over the last few weeks, thankfully, prices have fallen slightly—and I emphasize the word “slightly”—but there is no reason to celebrate. The national average is still about \$4.60 a gallon, which is about a buck and a half higher than it was last year alone.

So the American people are looking to Washington, DC, to their elected leaders, and they are wondering: Why aren't you doing something about it? They want to know what the Biden administration's plans are to address these rising costs, especially when it comes to things that are not—I mean, there are some things you can substitute for others. I even saw a woman on the news who said she decided to become a vegetarian because she couldn't afford the meat cost in the grocery store. But there are some things that are simply irreplaceable, and gasoline to drive your car is one of them.

Well, one of the most logical ways to increase the supply of gasoline—because it really is about supply and de-

mand—would be to boost American production of our domestic energy supply. That way, we could reap the economic benefits of strong production here at home, along with the jobs that go along with it. We could continue to use our capability to export things like natural gas to countries that previously were dependent almost exclusively on the Russian Federation.

Actually, the capacity of the United States to produce energy at home and export it around the world has changed the geopolitics of the planet in a very positive way. But, unfortunately, we see the Biden administration has taken a different approach. He knows that a part of his political base would have an absolute meltdown if the President showed anything other than contempt for the domestic energy producers. So he has come up with a different strategy that, frankly, makes no sense whatsoever.

So he is on a trip to the Middle East. He is going to visit with Muhammad bin Salman, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and ask him to increase production of oil and gas from not the United States but from Saudi Arabia. Forget American energy producers. President Biden would rather go, hat in hand, and talk to an autocrat, an oligarch in the Middle East, than take his boot off the neck of American energy producers.

So, apparently, the President is not anti-fossil fuels; he is just anti-American fossil fuels. President Biden's trip illustrates a remarkable show of his priorities. He views the crown prince in Saudi Arabia as a more dependable ally than energy producers in Texas.

Well, the decision to shop for oil in the Middle East instead of harnessing what is in our backyard is absolutely baffling. The sooner the administration views domestic energy producers as a friend and ally rather than enemies, the better we will all be off.

We are fortunate to live in a resource-rich country. Growing up, I learned in school that countries that are endowed with great natural resources have an advantage over other countries that do not have those natural resources. And we do have them here in the United States, along with the technology to develop them. But, for some strange reason, we just simply refuse to do so—take what is a gift and ignore it completely and go, hat in hand, and talk to autocrats in other parts of the world and ask them to do what we should be doing here domestically.

BORDER SECURITY

Well, Mr. President, on another matter, I am eager to head home this afternoon to Texas, where, as I mentioned, the weather is a little warm. We have been having, I think, about 33 days of plus-100-degree temperatures. And as I was telling some of my colleagues here, no, it is not a dry heat, which is usually the response when you tell somebody how hot it is. They say: Well, at least it is a dry heat.

It is not. It is very hot. But it is summertime in Texas, so we expect it, and we adjust to that.

But we are going specifically to the Rio Grande Valley, which is that 1,200-mile strip of land that is contiguous to Mexico, between Texas and Mexico. And we are going with some of our Senate colleagues so they can see for themselves what Senator CRUZ and I have seen before and have come to learn as a result of talking to the world's best experts in what is happening at the border, and that is the people who live and work there.

The men and women who live and work along our border are the experts and the best people to talk to and learn from, which is one reason why I continue to be disappointed that the Vice President, having been appointed border czar or immigration czar, has yet to make a substantive visit to the border to do what we will do this afternoon and tomorrow, which is to listen and learn. And maybe—just maybe—it would prompt a change in the failed policies which have created a huge humanitarian crisis. Well, the folks who live and work on the border know the strain this has placed on local law enforcement, on their hospitals, on their schools, and the danger it creates for their communities.

Just to be clear, I am not talking about safety concerns in those communities. Cities in the Rio Grande Valley and along Texas's southern border are not dangerous and lawless places, but the people who pass through there can be. And amid the 3 million people that the Border Patrol has encountered in the last year and a half, there, unfortunately, presents opportunities for people with criminal records and people who are members of gangs and drug traffickers to be obscured by the vast flow of these 3 million people.

But once people cross the border, they want to get to places like Chicago, San Diego, New York, Seattle, Atlanta. These are all places that have a presence of the drug cartels. What I don't think enough people realize is once the drugs come across the border—the same drugs that took the lives of 108,000 Americans last year through drug overdoses—once those drugs come across the border, the network by which they are distributed is largely criminal street gangs, who are also responsible for most of the violence in our communities across the country because they are fighting each other for territory, for market share, to sell these illegal drugs to unsuspecting consumers.

This is another reason for the spiking crime waves that we have seen in recent months across America. People want to act like this is something that is just contained in cities like Chicago, that it is a local problem. No. This is a systemic problem that flows from the Biden administration's unwillingness to provide any level of controls to people coming across the border or to deter people from making the long,